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ANNALS
OF THE
AMERICAN PULPIT;
OR
COMMEMORATIVE NOTICES
OF
DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN CLERGYMEN
OF
VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS,
FROM THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTRY TO THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE.
WITH HISTORICAL INTRODUCTIONS.
✓
BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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ings, that his submission and confidence in God seem never to have failed him. I have had the opportunity of reading a few of his manuscripts, as well as the only Sermon of his which was ever printed, and they all bear the impress of a mind of much more than ordinary comprehensiveness and energy.

AZEL ROE, D. D.*

1760—1815.

AZEL ROE, son of John Roe, was born at Setauket, on the East end of Long Island, on the 20th of February, 1738. His father was a man of considerable property, and of highly respectable standing in society. He was graduated at the College of New Jersey in 1756; and studied Theology under the direction of the Rev. Caleb Smith of Newark Mountains, (now Orange). He was licensed to preach the Gospel, by the New York Presbytery, in the latter part of the year 1759, or early in 1760; and, about two years after, was ordained to the work of the ministry, *sine titulo*, by the same Presbytery. After preaching, for some time, as a candidate, at Woodbridge, the congregation united in presenting him a call; and, having accepted it, he was installed in the autumn of 1763.

A few years after his settlement, a proposal was made to form a union between the congregation of which he was pastor and the upper congregation, (a branch or colony at Metuchin, called Second Woodbridge,) by which these churches were to be considered as one ecclesiastically,—that is, to have one Session, and to share equally in the services of the minister. A little before the year 1790, this united Church was visited by an extensive revival, which, in the course of two or three years, added to its numbers upwards of one hundred. The Congregation of the First Church became dissatisfied that the people of Metuchin should share equally with themselves the labours of their minister, and began to express the wish that the union to which they had consented, a few years before, might be dissolved; and this was finally effected, though not without strong opposition from the Congregation of Metuchin, nor until after repeated applications to the Presbytery. The dissolution of this union arose from an unbounded attachment to the pastor by both congregations. They both claimed him, and each desired to possess him wholly.

As his ministry included the period of the Revolutionary war, he showed himself, in various ways, an earnest friend to the liberties of his country. The part of New Jersey in which he resided, was much annoyed by marauding parties, sent out from the British troops encamped on Staten Island. On one occasion, a brave Continental Captain, who had done great execution in driving off or annoying these predatory bands, was very anxious to attack a party which had encamped near the Blazing Star Ferry, but could not induce his men to follow him. As many of them belonged to Mr.

* Records of the Church at Woodbridge.—MSS. from his grandson, Mr. A. S. Roe, and Rev W. M. Martin.

Roe's parish, he thought he would put in requisition *his* influence over them. Accordingly, he called and stated his difficulty, and found Mr. R. more than willing to second his efforts. The good minister accompanied the Captain to the place where the men were, and addressed a few words to them, exhorting them to their duty, and enforcing his exhortation by telling them that it was his purpose to go into the action himself. And into the action he went,—every man following readily. But when the bullets began to fly among them, they promised that if he would keep out of harm's way, they would do the business for the enemy. And seeing that their spirits were sufficiently excited, he did retire, and, as he afterwards acknowledged, very much to his own comfort.

But this was by no means the most serious point of his connection with the war. So active was he in stirring up all within his influence to enlist in his country's cause, that the Tories united with the British, and seized him one night while he was with his family, and carried him off as a prisoner to New York, where they shut him up in the "Sugar House." As they were on their way to New York, they were obliged to ford a small stream. The officer in command, who seemed to have taken a fancy to Mr. Roe, and treated him politely, insisted that the captured minister should allow him to carry him over upon his back. When they were in about the middle of the stream, Mr. Roe, who relished a joke, and was not wanting in ready wit, said to the officer,—“Well, Sir, if never before, you can say, after this, that you was once priest-ridden.” The officer was so convulsed with laughter, that he had well nigh fallen under his burden into the water. The morning after he arrived at New York, when he was without food, and knew not how his necessities were to be supplied, an excellent breakfast was sent to him by the father of Washington Irving who had been informed of his imprisonment; and this same gentleman took care that he was rendered comfortable until he was exchanged. Shortly after this, in order to prevent a second surprise, he moved his family some miles back towards Piscataway, but, after the war, he returned to the old Stone Parsonage.

Mr. Roe was a Trustee of the College of New Jersey twenty-nine years—from 1778 to 1807. He was a member of the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1789, and was Moderator of that body in 1802. He was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Yale College in 1800.

At the close of the war of 1812, a celebration took place at Woodbridge, which was signalized by the roasting of an ox; and Dr. Roe consented to officiate as orator on the occasion. His highly patriotic address awakened the strongest enthusiasm in the community at large, not excepting some in the church from which he had been separated, whose attachment towards him had been somewhat cooled by his having been called to render testimony in a court of law, adverse to their interest.

He was first married in September, 1763, to Rebecca, daughter of Major Isaac Foote of North Branford, Conn., and widow of the Rev. Caleb Smith, under whom he prosecuted his theological studies. She died on the 1st of September, 1794. She was the mother of all his children,—two sons and six daughters. On the 24th of December, 1796, he formed a second matrimonial connection. The lady who now became his wife was Hannah, daughter of the Rev. David Bostwick, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New York. She had been twice married before. Her first

husband was General McDougall of Revolutionary fame. Her second husband was Mr. Barret, Consul to France, and she was his widow when she was married to Dr. Roe. She was distinguished for a fine intellect, attractive manners, and consistent and elevated piety.

In November, 1815, Mrs. Roe was seized with lung fever, and died, after an illness of a few days, in perfect peace, in the sixty-seventh year of her age. When she saw that her husband seemed inconsolable in the prospect of her departure, she affectionately urged him to restrain his grief, and submit quietly to God's will. Up to the time of her death, which was on the 28th of November, his health had been uniformly good, and his ability to labour in no degree impaired. But the shock occasioned by her death was greater than he could bear. An affection of the throat, apparently caused by excessive grief, seized him; and, on the 2d of December,—four days after the death of his wife, he yielded up his spirit in a manner so peaceful that his children, who were aware that he had always been subject to a nervous dread of death, could hardly find it in their hearts to mourn his departure.

FROM THE REV. JOHN McDOWELL, D. D.,

PHILADELPHIA, January 29, 1857.

Rev. and dear Sir: I lose no time in replying to your request for my recollections of the Rev. Dr. Roe. He was one of my nearest ministerial neighbours for a number of years, and my relations to him were such as to give me a good opportunity of becoming acquainted with his character. I still hold him in grateful remembrance, and am in no wise reluctant to pay such a tribute to his memory as your request contemplates.

Dr. Roe was an old man when I first knew him; and his naturally fine appearance had been rendered venerable by age. He was of about the medium height—I should say, five feet and eight or nine inches, and well proportioned. His manners were more than ordinarily graceful and dignified, and indicated that he had been familiar with cultivated society. He was a person of excellent judgment and common sense, and though he is said to have possessed naturally strong feelings, he exercised, by means of either grace, or prudence, or both combined, remarkable self-control. He had a well disciplined and well cultivated mind, and had the reputation of being a good scholar. His preaching was distinguished for substantial excellence, rather than for those qualities which attract the multitude—his sermons were characterized by weighty, well digested and evangelical thought, so plainly expressed as always to be level to the humblest intelligence; but I cannot say that his manner of delivery was specially impressive. He was universally and highly esteemed as a pastor. He moved about among his people with great dignity, kindness, and faithfulness,—always evincing a watchful and earnest regard for their spiritual welfare. He was permitted, about a year before his death, to reap a rich harvest from his labours in an extensive and powerful revival of religion. He was a punctual attendant on the judicatories of the Church, and a useful and influential member; and continued his fidelity in his advanced age.

Dr. Roe was well known, and was held in high esteem, much beyond the neighbourhood in which he lived and laboured. That he must have had a high standing among the ministers of his own denomination, is sufficiently evinced by the fact that he was called to moderate its highest judicatory; and that he must have had a good reputation for talents and scholarship may be inferred from his having been honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Yale College.

You are doubtless aware of the remarkable proximity of Dr. Roe's death to that of his wife. I preached her Funeral Sermon on the 29th of November, 1815, and his on the 3d of December following,—there being an interval of only four days. My text at his funeral was—"The memory of the just is blessed;"—a sentiment which I am persuaded was heartily responded to, in its application to that honoured servant of God, by all who knew him.

With much esteem, yours,

JOHN McDOWELL.

JAMES WADDEL, D. D.*

1761—1805.

JAMES WADDEL, the son of Thomas Waddel, was born at Newry, in the North of Ireland, in July, 1739. His parents migrated to America in his infancy, and settled in the South-eastern part of Pennsylvania, on White Clay Creek. His mother was distinguished for her Christian knowledge and piety, and her attachment to Scottish Presbyterianism; and it was to her influence that he attributed his first religious impressions. In consequence of an injury which he received, at the age of twelve, upon his left hand, rendering it in a great degree useless, his father resolved to give him a liberal education. Accordingly he was sent to Nottingham, about fifteen miles distant, to the school of the Rev. Dr. Finley, where he enjoyed excellent advantages for both intellectual and moral culture. During the period of his connection with this school, he was the subject of very remarkable religious exercises, though they were not occasioned by any external means. He stated to Dr. Alexander that on two occasions in particular, he had such views of the glory and excellency of the Gospel as he never enjoyed afterwards. Dr. Finley rendered him important aid by his excellent counsel and instruction, and at length admitted him to the communion of the church.

Such was Mr. Waddel's proficiency, especially in the classics, that Dr. Finley took him, at an early age, to be his assistant. On leaving this school, he became an assistant teacher in another celebrated school of that day,—at Pequea, Lancaster County, Pa., under the care of the Rev. Robert Smith;—a school from which proceeded as many as fifty young men who were afterwards ministers of the Gospel. After having been engaged here a year or more, he set out to travel South, intending, as is supposed, to devote himself to teaching, and to settle in Charleston, S. C. On his way he stopped at Upper Marlborough, Md., where a Presbyterian church had already been founded; and though he was solicited to remain there, the inducements were not so strong as to detain him, and he pursued his journey till he reached Hanover County, Va. Here he had the pleasure of listening to the eloquence, and making the acquaintance, of that prince of pulpit orators, Samuel Davies; and it was this circumstance probably that gave the decisive direction to his life. Mr. Davies not only forbade him to go farther, but urged him to devote himself at once to the ministry.

* Notices of Dr. Waddel in the "Watchman of the South."—Foote's Sketches of Va., I.—Life of Rev. Dr. Alexander.—MS. from Rev. Dr. Hill.